

# Vision of Rockville in 2020 And Associated Priorities for 2006-2008

**Approved by the City of Rockville Mayor and Council on May 8, 2006**

*THE VISION: In 2020, Rockville is widely recognized as one of the nation's very best places to live and work. It has rapidly emerged as an international city with a strong presence in the global economy. Rockville has renewed itself, and it continues to adapt successfully to changing circumstances, while at the same time preserving its rich history and maintaining its strong stable neighborhoods. As the Montgomery County seat, Rockville is not just a center of government; it is also Montgomery County's commercial and cultural capital.*

## A Distinctive Place

Successful cities possess a strong sense of place. Rockville's sense of place is the product of a unique eclectic community tapestry integrating tradition, continuity and renewal.

Located within the vast and dynamic metropolitan area adjacent to the nation's capital, Rockville has successfully distinguished itself as a vibrant small city that combines a rich historical heritage, small town charm, urbane progressiveness and an international flavor.

Rockville is distinguished by its historical, cultural and architectural heritage. Since shortly after emerging as a distinct place in the mid-1700's, when it was an important crossroads village on the historic Great Road linking George Town and Frederick Town, Rockville has been recognized as a thriving center of local government and commerce. Rockville was established as the Montgomery County seat in 1776, and in 1860 became the first town in the county to incorporate.

Rockville's roles in the Civil War and the Underground Railroad are also noteworthy, and remain as relevant as ever to defining our distinctiveness.

Our rich history is still evident in the City's many well-restored and maintained historic homes, churches and public buildings. Rockville still utilizes its original courthouses and has successfully rehabilitated many of its valuable structures and put them to creative use. Glenview Mansion is still our crown jewel.

Rockville takes equal pride in being home to many companies and research institutions working at the forefronts of science and technology. Our international scientific prominence is a distinction that has attracted significant numbers of scientists, professionals and business people from every continent.

Rockville is distinguished by its successful renewal of its city center, as well as by the creation of an equally significant and thriving center in the vicinity of the Twinbrook Metro Station. Both centers are



**The Red Brick Courthouse is a Town Center landmark.**

important civic gathering places that provide Rockville residents and visitors with opportunities to learn, relax, dine, shop and connect with one another. The appearance, feel and vibrancy of these centers have established Rockville's pre-eminence as a mixed-use community in the Washington, D.C., area.

Rockville's rich cultural and ethnic diversity is the combined result of the community identity felt by long-term residents, the openness with which we welcome newcomers and our participation in the global economy. Numerous community centers and cultural venues, businesses and commercial establishments of every type, an extensive network of beautiful parks and superior municipal services are all unsurpassed in quality. Together they serve the wide variety of needs of all individuals in the community.

Rockville celebrates its history, cultural diversity and optimism for the future with numerous civic events. Our Memorial Day Parade is the oldest and largest in the metropolitan Washington area, and caps the annual Hometown Holidays celebration. This weekend-long extravaganza

featuring arts and crafts, food and musical entertainment is a Rockville showcase that each year attracts more than 100,000 people from within and around the city.

Our traditional observances of Veteran's Day and July 4th are among the most distinctive and popular celebrations in the entire Washington region. The twice-weekly seasonal Farmers' Market has served the community for more than 30 years, not only as a place to select from the bounty of locally grown produce, but also as a lively locale for neighbors to meet, socialize and be entertained.

### 2006-08 Vision Priorities:

- ✓ Bring a Science Center to the City
- ✓ Develop and pursue a strategy to take possession of Lincoln High School, the Red Brick Courthouse and the Old Post Office
- ✓ Identify properties eligible for historic designation and pursue a reasonable strategy to preserve properties worthy of designation

## A City of Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods are the heart and the soul of our city. Rockville has more than 70 distinct neighborhoods.

From its historic 19th century neighborhoods, through its various 20th century suburban subdivisions and multi-unit residences, and continuing through its early 21st century redeveloped mixed-use neighborhoods, run the common threads of community identity, adaptability and diversity.

Rockville's neighborhoods are safe, inviting, attractive and well maintained. The more recently built homes and additions are in harmony with surrounding older houses. Revitalization and redevelopment, where needed, are readily undertaken and achieved.

The size and variety of the housing stock is adequate to address the needs of a growing and changing population. There is a wide variety of housing types and styles, and an appropriate balance of owner-occupied and rental units. The housing stock includes a good supply of units affordable to seniors, first-time buyers and the entire broad spectrum of the workforce.

Our neighborhoods are pedestrian-friendly and physically connected to each other, as well as to parks, schools, stores, recreational facilities and public transportation. They are safe places for indi-



**Community events for all residents help define Rockville.**

viduals of all ages and from all walks of life; and a full range of high quality municipal services serves them equitably.

While residents identify strongly with their own neighborhoods, they also feel connected to, and care about, the community as a whole.

### 2006-08 Vision Priorities:

- ✓ Address property maintenance issues, with particular emphasis on rental houses
- ✓ Review affordable housing programs and explore options for improved programs
- ✓ Establish regulations to ensure the compatibility of new construction with existing structures
- ✓ Establish loop shuttle service to connect neighborhoods with Town Center and the Rockville Metro Station

## An Exceptional Built Environment

The quality of a city's built environment is fundamental to the community's overall quality of life.

Rockville has become a model for other communities in terms of the quality of its development. This has been achieved by holding development and redevelopment projects to high standards that are codified in the city's innovative zoning ordinance and other land use regulations.

New development exhibits more strongly than ever Rockville's high standards. The areas within walking distance of the Rockville and Twinbrook Metro stations now offer residents and visitors the ultimate urban village experience, characterized by the following:

- Appropriately scaled, attractive buildings and other structures
- Excellent pedestrian and bicycle accessibility within these areas and to surrounding neighborhoods
- Convenient accessibility to public transportation
- Ample green space, wide sidewalks, and enhanced streetscapes
- Mix of uses that includes retail, restaurant, residential, office, entertainment and community
- Opportunities for locally-owned stores and restaurants
- Ownership and control of retail and restaurant space is not highly concentrated and there is a healthy competitive market for such space
- Sufficient parking provided in garages that are largely hidden from view
- High quality construction that ages well and endures

The momentum generated by the successful redevelopment of Town Center and Twinbrook Commons has stimulated the transformation of the entire length of Rockville



**Variety in mobility improves communities.**

Pike/Route 355. Once a stark street lined with strip centers, big box stores and immense surface parking lots, the Pike is becoming a handsome boulevard flanked by well designed and attractive commercial, office and mixed-use redevelopment. It is enhanced with appealing streetscapes, parks and other green space and safe and inviting pedestrian connections.

Rockville is a leader in environmentally sustainable development that protects and enhances our community's quality of life. Rockville residents, its local government and the business community foster and apply sound environmental practices. High technology, energy conservation and recycling are employed appropriately at every opportunity.

### 2006-08 Vision Priorities:

- ✓ Develop a framework and inventory of practices that will move Rockville toward being a sustainable, energy saving and environmentally sensitive community
- ✓ Complete the rewriting of the Zoning Code
- ✓ Complete master planning for the Twinbrook Metro Station area, Rockville Pike and Stronestreet Avenue

## Balanced Growth

Growth is sustainable only when there is sufficient infrastructure to support it.

The requisite physical infrastructure of major utilities, transportation systems, schools and many other facilities has been provided and maintained by a multitude of public and private entities. Even with high growth, public and private interests work in co-operative partnership. Plans and activities have been well coordinated both regionally and locally to ensure adequate infrastructure capacity exists presently, future infrastructure will be in place at the time it is needed and all facilities are fully operational and maintained in excellent condition.

Rockville values and actively welcomes revitalization of the existing community, but growth has only been permitted where and when there has been adequate school and traffic capacity. Much of Rockville's through traffic is now on alternate routes such as the InterCounty



**School capacity will be a factor in Rockville's future growth.**

Connector, Montrose Parkway and Gude Drive.

For its part, the City's sidewalks and streets and intersections, water and sewer lines, street lighting, public buildings and parks have caught up with and now keep pace with the community's needs, and are maintained in excellent condition.

The City's growth policies and strategies grasp fully the close interrelationships among land use, quality planning, private investment, economic development, fiscal policy,

municipal infrastructure and services, environmental quality and the City's financial solvency. Policies and strategies also reflect a strong regional perspective and commitment.

The City takes an active part in various alliances with other municipalities, Montgomery County, educational institutions and the State of Maryland. These alliances focus most strongly on reducing peak hour traffic volumes, increasing transit accessibility and use, and ensuring schools are not overcrowded.

### 2006-08 Vision Priorities:

- ✓ Develop a strategy of incentives and requirements for the private sector to provide all infrastructures, including school capacity, needed to support new development and redevelopment
- ✓ Complete a comprehensive analysis of infrastructure investments needed over the next decade, and develop options for funding them

## Fiscal Strength

Only a fiscally strong City government can maintain the public infrastructure and provide the variety of high quality municipal services required to sustain a superior quality of life for the community. A fiscally strong City can do so despite local and regional financial disruptions, and other changes that place on it new demands.

Rockville generates sufficient revenues to meet expenditures necessary to provide services required for the health, safety and welfare of the community. The City does not incur deficits, maintains General Fund cash reserves of at least 15 percent and exhibits long-run solvency.

Rockville's responsible past investments have garnered exceptional returns, which are

reinforced by consistent sound fiscal policies and practices that ensure its ability to pay for all of the costs of doing business well into the future. Economic development is focused on maintaining a diversified, balanced and growing tax base that does not overburden homeowners.

The public's investment in Town Square has successfully stimulated the redevelopment and rejuvenation of the entire 60-acre Town Center, as well as other areas of the City, without incurring new public debt. Developers contribute the full cost of infrastructure needed to support their projects, and Montgomery County is a full investment partner.

The City provides a full range of municipal services and facilities that are cost-effective, efficient and well received by its

citizens. The City government spends taxpayers' dollars thoughtfully and is recognized widely as a good and responsible steward of the public's resources. All City enterprise funds are strong and self-supporting, and a strong, diverse and growing tax base sustains the General Fund.

### 2006-08 Vision Priorities:

- ✓ Develop a tax relief strategy for the future that reduces the residential property tax burden, and restructures the ratio of residential and commercial tax revenue
- ✓ Review enterprise funds and take actions necessary to make them self-sufficient
- ✓ Provide a limited amount of free parking in Town Center to each Rockville household

## Communication and Engagement

The most successful communities are those with a substantial portion of its citizens committed to working actively for the betterment of the community, and with multiple opportunities for citizens to exercise that commitment.

In Rockville, there is a wide range of avenues through which citizens engage in civic and community life, including neighborhood and homeowners' associations, nonprofit

organizations and voluntary associations of all stripes, philanthropic campaigns and the City government.

Rockville encourages and practices two-way communication with its citizens, and provides meaningful and effective opportunities for all citizens to participate in the decisions that shape the community.

Rockville is a place where citizens are provided with many opportunities to become fully

informed about, and to become actively engaged in, their government and community.

The City government fosters and maintains a wide variety of means for communicating with citizens, and provides opportunities for citizens to participate in government decisions, including volunteer service on boards, committees, commissions and task forces.

Citizen interest in local issues is widespread, and there is a high

level of participation in community organizations and local government across all segments of the population. Citizens feel generally positive about, and are supportive of, the City government.

The City uses all effective means to keep citizens informed of City activities, projects, policies and issues. Citizens are encouraged to communicate their concerns and ideas and have confidence that they are being heard.

Periodic surveys and other feedback mechanisms indicate that citizens feel they are well informed about and involved with their City government, including its Mayor,



**The Mayor and Council hold a Walking Town Meeting with residents.**

Councilmembers and staff.

The leaders in the City's neighborhood, homeowner and civic associations represent their communities effectively. They aim to further both the interests

of their members and the common good of the community as a whole. The business community also is strongly civic-minded and actively involved in local government.

### 2006-08 Vision Priorities:

- ✓ Develop and implement a comprehensive City government communications strategy, with particular emphasis on strengthening citizen awareness and involvement, and responsiveness to citizen input
- ✓ Review and analyze the City's system for selecting members of boards and commissions, how boards and commissions are utilized, and the quality of their involvement